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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
August 1970

ARMY review(s) completed.

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Communist Infrastructure

Introduction

1. "Infrastructure" is a term the US began using in the early 1960s to characterize the extensive non-military portion of the Vietnamese Communist organization. Although its definition has never been fully resolved, it has usually been interpreted to include enemy civilian personnel in South Vietnam engaged in political, economic, propaganda, security, and other activities.* Its membership has ranged from executives of the Current Affairs Committee at the national level to low-level security personnel who serve in the hamlets. In territory under the control of the Communists, the infrastructure includes the overt government; in areas that are contested or under South Vietnamese control, it exists covertly and has the primary goal of subverting the authority and effectiveness of the South Vietnamese government.

2. The infrastructure has been defined by Phoenix as: "... the political and administrative organization through which the Vietnamese Communists seek control over the people of the Republic of Vietnam. It embodies the Communist Party control structure and the leadership and administration of front organizations from national through hamlet level. It includes individuals who are members or probationary members of the Vietnamese Communist Party and those non-Communist members who perform an enemy cadre function." The definition has been open to broad interpretation.

* *The Appendix gives a short description of the Communist non-military organization.*

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence, the Office of National Estimates, the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs,

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3. Some analysts have thought of the infrastructure in terms of a broad definition which would include all non-military personnel who serve the Communists in any capacity. An estimate based on such a definition would be considerably larger than those discussed below. Others have thought of the term as applying to the key, or "cadre," elements of the organization in order to exclude persons of lesser importance, most of whom are not Party members. In describing the extensiveness of the organized insurgency base, the former concept is in order. However, the Party or the narrower key personnel element is the more appropriate concept for most of our countersubversive activities. The Phoenix definition attempts to approximate the narrower definition.

Size

4. In addition to the conceptual problem, the complexity of the Viet Cong non-military structure and the widespread use of part-time workers have made it extremely difficult to arrive at estimates of the size of the infrastructure. Largely because of these difficulties, no consistent meaningful definition has been developed. US analysts and organizations have tended to use several different methodologies for estimating the infrastructure, depending on their purposes. All of these definitions have tended to exclude low-level and part-time non-Party personnel. They have also largely excluded the Communists' covert assets located in South Vietnamese territory.

5. The current Phoenix estimate of Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI) is 67,000. The primary purpose of the Phoenix working definition is as a management tool to "control" the quality of infrastructure eliminations reporting. To this end, Phoenix divides possible VCI into three categories -- A, B, and C -- roughly according to their usefulness to the Communists' cause. The estimate excludes the C category. The estimate also excludes most of the subversive personnel operating in territory controlled by the South Vietnamese government.

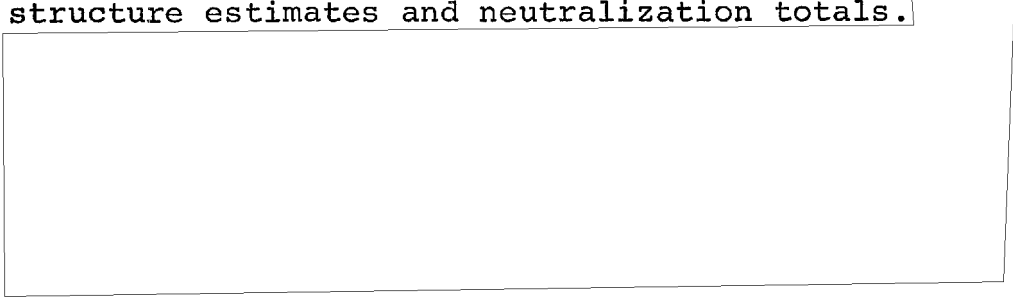
6. The Phoenix estimate of 67,000 is largely based on reporting from the districts. Unfortunately,

criteria for counting infrastructure personnel vary considerably by area. In one province in the Delta, for example, the local Phoenix estimator counts only security police. In others, there is considerable confusion as to what constitutes a "cadre." Furthermore, no province attempts to enumerate Viet Cong cadres who operate in territory controlled by the South Vietnamese government.

7. A CIA estimate of 80,000-100,000 was made in early 1968. This estimate, based on extrapolations from a limited number of captured documents, counted all full-time civilian workers at district level and above and large numbers of part-timers at the village and hamlet level. Like the Phoenix estimate, the CIA estimate did not attempt to enumerate Viet Cong cadres in GVN territory.

Trends in Strength

8. It is not possible to show numerically whether the strength of the infrastructure is going up or down. The main reason for the difficulty is that definitions and accounting procedures have changed so frequently that there is no compatible series of statistics over the past five years. Nor is there a relationship between overall infrastructure estimates and neutralization totals.



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9. Phoenix neutralization statistics -- which show 19,500 VCI "killed, captured, or rallied" in 1969, as compared with 15,776 in 1968 -- are misleading for several reasons. The killed often include persons improperly identified. Many of the captured are frequently released after a short period of detention. Many listed as defectors are actually false ralliers sent by the Communists into Chieu Hoi centers in order to obtain legal GVN identification papers. On the other hand, the neutralization figures include many important Communist agents who are not by definition part of

the infrastructure. Furthermore, large numbers of cadre who are killed or quit do not show up in the neutralization data. Nonetheless we believe that experienced analysts can use the neutralization data along with information from captured documents, prisoners, and defectors to gain insight into the magnitude and quality of personnel being lost by the Communists.

10. These materials provide an adequate body of evidence which makes it possible to draw some general conclusions about non-military strength trends during the past several years. According to captured documents and prisoner reports, some elements of the infrastructure underwent expansion prior to the 1968 Tet offensive but incurred heavy losses through exposure during and after Tet. The accelerated pacification and Phoenix programs, which went into high gear in late 1968, placed increasing pressure on the infrastructure. All factors considered, there is general agreement that the overall strength of the non-military portion of the VCI has declined in the past two or more years. Although most of the decline appears to have occurred at the village and hamlet echelons, there is also evidence of attrition at the district and province levels.

11. The most persuasive evidence comes from the Communists themselves in the form of captured documents, prisoners, and defector reports. A recent report, purportedly reflecting the views of COSVN, indicated that the Communists regard the Phoenix and the accelerated pacification programs as the most effective threat to the infrastructure the Allies have mounted so far. This same report, covering the period from Tet 1968 to September 1969, stated that great numbers of cadres had been killed and captured, and an especially large number had defected to the GVN.

12. The documents indicate the Communists are hurting worse in some areas than in others. They have been hit hardest in Saigon itself. From October 1968 to April 1969, six of Saigon's nine Precinct Party Committees were rolled up by the Special Police. Recently captured documents indicate that the Saigon operations of COSVN's Strategic Intelligence Office (SIO) -- which runs high-level

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penetrations in the South Vietnamese government -- were seriously curtailed last year. A document of early 1970, for example, stated that a fifth of the SIO's assets in Saigon "were arrested or had defected" during 1969, that two-fifths were withdrawn from the city because of compromise or improper papers, and that only two-fifths continued to operate as before. Among those arrested were at least one member of the National Assembly, two South Vietnamese Army majors who had served in the National Police Special Branch, an ex-deputy police chief of Hue, the ex-assistant head of the counter-intelligence branch of ARVN's Military Security Service (MSS), and a special assistant in the office of President Thieu. The buffeting the Communist structure has received in Saigon is apparently reflected in the decline in the rate of terrorist incidents there. The incident rate in the city is now the lowest it has been for several years. Evidence of a similar decline in fortunes has been received from Da Nang.

13. Although the government probably has done better in cities than in the countryside in wrapping up cadres, there is considerable evidence that the infrastructure has been hurt in many rural areas.

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14. To help make up for VCI personnel losses, Hanoi has continued to send civilian personnel to South Vietnam, and the share of northerners in the VCI has grown.* According to Phoenix reporting,

** There is a tendency to conclude that the use of North Vietnamese in Communist infrastructure is a sign of weakness because northerners cannot be as effective in the south because of regional animosities. There is evidence, however, that a large North Vietnamese presence in the infrastructure does not necessarily diminish the proselyting potential of the local apparatus. Many northern cadres perform important technical and political functions which do not entail much public exposure.*

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between 20% and 30% of cadre slots in Phu Yen are now filled by northerners. A recent high-level defector estimated early this year that as of late 1969 some 30,000 civilians had come south. Other information lends credence to his claim.

15. Local recruiting of Party members has clearly fallen off in most regions, yet reports indicate that it is still going on, even in areas under nominal government control.

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16. In any case, the true strength of the enemy's infrastructure is less a matter of gross numbers than the quality of these personnel and the environment in which they operate. For example, of the estimated 20,000 military proselyting agents, only about 10%-20% are Party members. Of the total, about one-half are carried on the Communist roles as "sympathizers." These personnel will be greatly affected by trends in the overall situation.

17. The damage inflicted on the infrastructure in the past two years should not be exaggerated. Many developments counted as gains also have negative implications which should be weighed in a final assessment. Although several important penetration agents have been arrested in Saigon, their very presence demonstrates the effectiveness of the enemy's espionage and subversive systems. Furthermore, the gains of the pacification program remain highly perishable in many areas, as evidenced from recent experiences in Binh Dinh and Phu Yen Provinces, where the Communists appear to have reversed positive trends almost overnight. The pacification program may in fact contain seeds of its own weakness. As large numbers of people come under GVN control, many inevitably are vulnerable to the underground "legal" network that the Communists are attempting to enlarge.

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Prospects for the Future

18. The Communists' ability to maintain or expand their structure depends on a number of factors, of which the overall course of the war is primary. When things go well for the Communists, replacements are easier to come by; when the opposite is true, they are harder to find. Whether the Viet Cong structure grows or contracts also depends on the enemy's strategy for fighting the war. When the Communists stress main force warfare, battlefield losses are high, and the non-military as well as the military organizations suffer for competent cadres. When the enemy assumes a low battlefield profile, as he has done for the past year and a half, the Communists have greater freedom to shift trusted personnel from the military to the political arenas of the conflict. Finally, the size and quality of the Communists' non-military structure depends in part on the level of civilian infiltration from North Vietnam. The future viability of the Communist Party structure in the south over the next year is discussed below in terms of a number of alternative assumptions.

Case I

19. *This case assumes that ceasefire occurs and both NVA and US troops regroup or withdraw. Both sides are free to use political action programs to improve their relative positions. During this period, pacification at least holds its own or makes some slow progress; economic and political conditions remain serious, but no worse than they are today.*

Discussion

20. Under these circumstances the Allies' greatest asset -- its offensive military force -- would be neutralized while the Communists would have their subversive structure intact. The relaxation of Allied military pressure would make it easier for the enemy to mount operations in GVN territory. It would also encourage large numbers of persons to return to their homes in Viet Cong territory where they would be prime targets for enemy proselyting efforts. Because the Communists would be able to transfer large numbers of cadres from their

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military forces, the infrastructure would probably expand in size and quality. The Military Proselyting Section, Security Section, the Political Struggle Apparatus, and components of the Civilian Proselyting bureaucracy would almost certainly expand the most. In addition, there would be a tendency to send increasing numbers of cadres into GVN territory.

21. At the same time the various components of the Party structure operating in GVN territory would probably become more vulnerable as the exposure of Communist cadres increased. The extent to which the GVN could take advantage of the increased vulnerability is difficult to predict, however. Assuming the most optimistic of plausible assumptions -- as this case does -- there might be some further attrition of the structure a year after the ceasefire. Even so, the hard core would certainly remain intact and reasonably effective. As one moves away from the most optimistic set of assumptions, the prospects for the enemy's infrastructure greatly improve. Furthermore, there is the psychological effect of a US withdrawal from South Vietnam. Unless the GVN is able to maintain momentum and improve its image, the Communists' claim that they had forced the withdrawal of the foreign army might well be regarded as credible by the population. In this case, the Party structure would almost certainly be larger, more aggressive, and more highly motivated than it is today.

Case II

22. *This case assumes that there is no ceasefire but that US troops continue to withdraw. As under Case I, it is assumed that pacification at least holds its own or makes some slow progress; economic and political conditions remain serious, but no worse than they are today.*

Discussion

23. The principal difference between this Case and Case I -- which assumes a ceasefire -- is that the Allies would have the continued use of their strongest asset, their main forces. These would continue to be used to support pacification by providing a shield against enemy main forces.

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24. The assumption that pacification at least holds its own or makes some slow progress is a critical one, not only in terms of the situation in general, but also in terms of the continued strength and viability of the infrastructure. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] it was concluded that the presence of the US maneuver units was a critical factor in the control situation and that as a result of US troop reductions over the next year, GVN control losses were almost certainly to take place in several heavily populated key provinces. Overall, we were not optimistic that the GVN could significantly increase its control over the countryside during 1970.

25. Two developments since these conclusions were reached seem significant. First, the Communists' local assets (Local Forces, Guerrillas, and infrastructure) have been successful in maintaining high levels of terrorism, harassment, and propaganda in many contested and nominally GVN-controlled areas. Evidence of a determined effort to maintain and augment these local assets with main force personnel continues to come in. This suggests that the Party structure may be holding its own.

26. The second development is the Cambodian situation -- both the Communist effort to topple the Lon Nol government and the Allied operation which has upset or impeded Communist plans. The situation in Cambodia not only has diverted substantial numbers of VC/NVA main force troops from operations in South Vietnam, but also has resulted in some unanticipated levies for financial, material, and personnel resources. Thus the immediate effect of the changed situation in Cambodia has been to reduce the capabilities of the Party structure at least in the short term. What effect Cambodia will have on the infrastructure over a longer period is impossible to predict. Much will depend on the ability of the GVN to overcome its fundamental shortcomings and on the viability of the Lon Nol government.

27. Another difference between this Case and Case I is the continued requirement by the Communists to maintain military forces in order to counter the Allied armies. The Communists would

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be unable to augment the infrastructure freely with cadre from the military. Second, the threat posed by Allied offensive activities against base areas would make it more difficult for them to mount political, subversive, and terrorist activity. Finally, refugees -- and, for that matter, ARVN soldiers -- would be less prone to return to their homes in Viet Cong territory. All of these aspects would make it difficult for the Communists to expand the infrastructure.

28. If one assumes that GVN security forces improve and that no major dislocation occurs -- such as a coup, or a Communist takeover in Cambodia -- one could imagine a situation in which the Communist Party structure would continue to find itself with many of the same problems it has now: attrition of its cadres and a reluctance on the part of the South Vietnamese people to cooperate with it actively. Even under this assumption, it is likely that the hard-core of the Communist infrastructure, including a large part of the subversive apparatus within the government, would continue to operate, although not as effectively as before.

29. However, the continuing withdrawal of US troops makes the Allied main forces a dwindling asset. It is probable that in those areas where US maneuver units leave, the infrastructure will be able either to maintain the status quo or to improve its prospects. These prospects would be heightened if US withdrawals were accompanied by political turmoil in South Vietnam, a collapse of the present regime in Cambodia, or a worsening of South Vietnamese economic problems.

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APPENDIX

Communist Non-Military Organization

In running the Communist organization, the Hanoi Politburo sees Vietnam as a single country, the area south of the 17th Parallel being as much its responsibility as the Vietnamese provinces north of the DMZ. However, because of the difficulty in exercising its authority over the southern reaches of South Vietnam, Hanoi in late 1960 created an advance headquarters which US analysts call the "Central Office of South Vietnam" (COSVN).^{*} COSVN directly controls operations in the southern half of South Vietnam (that is, everything south of the southern border of VC Region V). Hanoi maintains more direct control of operations in the northern half of the country. Whether under the direct control of Hanoi or of COSVN, the Communist structure is generally the same both in its vertical and horizontal organization.

There are six echelons in the Communists' organizational structure: (1) national, (2) region, (3) province/subregion, (4) district/city, (5) village, and (6) hamlet. At each echelon of command, there is a Viet Cong structure responsible for the performance of all the functions of government, ranging from public health to internal security. At district level and above, the agencies are formal, highly structured, and manned by full-time personnel. In the villages and hamlets, the organization is relatively loose, is staffed mostly by part-timers, and does not always include all components.

Within the structure, orders are transmitted from upper to lower echelons through two channels. The first is the Party channel which starts at the Politburo in Hanoi and extends through the Party Current Affairs Committees of the lower echelons. A directive decreeing a major policy change would

^{*} "Central Office of South Vietnam" is a mistranslation of a Vietnamese phrase meaning "Central Office of the Southern Area."

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move through the Party channel. The second command channel is administrative. Each specialized bureaucracy uses its own administrative channel to give instructions to and exert control over its subordinates. An example of an administrative order would be a police directive traversing the security apparatus chain of command from the Ministry of Public Security in Hanoi to regional or provincial security sections.

At each echelon, the Communist organization consists of a number of agencies. In Hanoi, they are called Ministries and Departments. At COSVN and other echelons in the south, they are most often called "Sections." A typical Communist organization at the province level consists of the following elements (see the chart):

- a. The Current Affairs Committee, which directs the province's day-to-day activities. It is made up of about half a dozen senior cadres, including the Party Secretary, the head of the Security Section, and the chief of the echelon's military forces.
- b. The Administrative Office, which handles the Current Affairs Committee's correspondence.
- c. The Organization Section, which is the Party personnel office.
- d. The Finance and Economy Section, which controls the Viet Cong economy, collects taxes, and deals with other financial matters.
- e. The Forward Supply Council, which oversees the recruitment and deployment of civilian laborers and related logistic problems within the province.
- f. The Civil Health Section, which supervises civilian clinics and health services.

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g. The Political Struggle Section, which tries to foment disorders in territory controlled by the South Vietnamese government.*

h. The Propaganda and Training Section, which controls the school system, publishes newspapers and pamphlets, and runs propaganda campaigns.

i. The Security Section, which runs the Viet Cong police and controls a counter-intelligence espionage network within South Vietnamese security and intelligence organs.

j. The Military Proselyting Section, which runs the subversive effort against South Vietnamese military and security organizations.

k. The Civilian Proselyting bureaucracy, which tries to persuade South Vietnamese citizens to support the Viet Cong cause. It does so through such organizations as the National Liberation Front and the Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces.

All but three of the above components operate in both Viet Cong and GVN territory. The exceptions are the Current Affairs Committee, its Administrative Office, and the Organization Section. These components almost invariably stay in territory under Viet Cong control. The headquarters elements of the other components are also stationed in Viet Cong territory.

Obviously, some components of the infrastructure are more threatening to the South Vietnamese

* *Not all areas have formal Political Struggle Sections. In areas where they do not exist, their functions are performed by other elements. They are more common in the northern half of the country than in the south.*

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government than others. Of those listed above, the most dangerous are the Security Section,* which contains some of the Viet Cong's most efficient and ruthless cadres, and the Military Proselyting Section, which has an extensive agent network within the South Vietnamese armed forces and security agencies.

** The Security Section provides a typical example of the problems in defining the VCI. The Security Sections maintain quasi-military armed Security units which could reasonably be counted as part of the enemy combat forces.*

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Subsequent to the completion of this paper analyzing the strength and structure of VC Local Forces in Kontum and Pleiku Provinces, a document was received providing a detailed picture of some Local Forces in Pleiku Province (see Annex 1). The document not only helps to substantiate the analytical method used in the paper, but also provides a basis for strength estimates somewhat larger than presented in the paper.

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Summary

A methodology for arriving at Order of Battle estimates for Viet Cong provincial military organizations is presented in this paper. It utilizes a standard VC organizational structure in interpreting evidence on the strength and structure of individual provinces. The OB for two provinces -- VC Gia Lai and Kontum -- has been examined to demonstrate this organizational approach to Order of Battle estimates. Many heretofore unrecognized VC military units in both provinces were found and total VC force levels for the two provinces are estimated to be several thousand personnel greater than previously estimated.

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Introduction

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to demonstrate a method for arriving at an Order of Battle (OB) estimate for VC provincial military units in South Vietnam. The memorandum employs an approach to the OB which sees the VC in context, by taking standard VC military structure in the provinces as a guide and as a reliable indicator where the documentary evidence is slim or non-existent. Besides utilizing a standard VC Table of Organization and Equipment, the paper makes extensive use of captured documents and related material. By viewing the documentary material in the structural context, estimates can be made that more accurately assess enemy strength than can a simple totaling of the strength of units that have had multiple confirmation. Two cases -- those of VC Gia Lai (GVN Pleiku) and VC Kontum Provinces -- are scrutinized in presenting the OB method and the evidence. In the case of Gia Lai Province, the evidence is abundant and of relatively high quality. The evidence for Kontum Province is much less satisfactory. In both cases, however, VC provincial strengths are estimated to be considerably higher than those previously estimated. This paper utilizes VC boundaries, but little distortion is introduced by this factor as they are similar to GVN boundaries.

2. In arriving at strength estimates for VC military components of the two provinces, a number of assumptions are made: first, that VC military organization is fairly uniform, at least at province and district levels; second, that the captured documents used are not

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fabrications, and that the numbers and unit designations contained therein are accurate insofar as the VC believed them to be accurate.

3. The memorandum first describes a standard VC military structure for a province, and then discusses the extent to which the Gia Lai and Kontum Provinces measure up to the standard.

The Province Unit Structure

4. Viet Cong Provincial Military Organizations are structurally similar, both in their vertical and horizontal organizations.

5. Vertically, the Province -- the military headquarters -- has province, district, village, and hamlet echelons. Almost invariably, the province headquarters also has a city unit assigned to the province capital and on an organizational par with the districts. In some provinces there are also area (or vung) units. A Vung is an echelon usually positioned between the district and village levels. Soldiers assigned to province, district, city, and vung echelons are ordinarily designated Local Force troops. Those subordinate to the villages and hamlets are called "Guerrilla/Militia."

6. Horizontally, provincial echelons appear to have a standard organization. Besides the headquarters, there is usually one or more combat battalions (infantry or sapper), and several smaller combat units, such as sapper, engineer, special action, reconnaissance, and heavy weapons formations. Supporting the combat units are military, political, and rear services staffs, together with associated support units such

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as transportation, medical, training, and ordnance. In some provinces, but apparently not all, there is also a military post office. The US intelligence community calls the staffs, their associated units, and the military post office the "Administrative Services." The province battalion(s) is often referred to as "the concentrated unit" and the entire provincial military organization is sometimes referred to as "the province unit."

7. The horizontal military organization of a VC district closely resembles the provincial horizontal organization. Instead of an infantry battalion, as at province level, the district usually has an infantry company. Districts also have a number of smaller independent combat and "Administrative Services" formations from cell to platoon in size, directly subordinate to the district military headquarters. The district also possesses the three staffs, and sometimes a military post office.

8. Village military structures usually have a rudimentary organization. Ideally, a village has a guerrilla platoon (light infantry), supported by couriers, intelligence personnel, and laborers assigned to village workshops (repairing rifles, making grenades, etc.). Actually, few villages meet the ideal, and what are supposed to be platoons, are frequently reinforced squads. Usually a platoon or squad of self defense militia supports the guerrilla unit at the village level.

9. Hamlet military organizations are even smaller. Usually an ill-equipped guerrilla squad supported by a few self defense militiamen -- who are seldom armed -- comprise the hamlet unit.

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10. From time to time during the course of the insurgency, but especially since the beginning of the 1967-1968 Winter-Spring Campaign, VC provincial military personnel have been subjected to large, sometimes wholesale transfers. For example, district companies have formed the nucleus of new provincial battalions and new companies have been formed from guerrillas. Sometimes these formations are permanent, sometimes temporary. But the basic organizational structure remains the same and almost invariably new units (personnel) are formed (or recruited) to replace those lost to the higher level.

11. At province level, Gia Lai military units appear to be somewhat larger than the national average. Captured documents and POW reports suggest the province contains the following combat formations: the H15 Local Force Battalion,¹ the newly formed X45 Local Force Battalion,² the X17 and X18 Engineering Companies,³ the C1 Independent Company,⁴ a sapper company,⁵ a combat support company,⁶ the X11 Signal Platoon,⁷ and the X12 Reconnaissance Platoon.⁸

12. Less specific information is available on the VC "Administrative Services" at province level. Captured documents indicate, however, that the military staff contains signal, intelligence, personnel, militia, operations and training, engineering, sapper, recon, farm production, and administrative components.⁹ The overall size of the military staff is unknown, although its signal component apparently averaged 42 members through 1967.¹⁰ Although a document confirmed the existence of a political staff, no information is available as to its size.¹¹ Usually

political staffs are small. Other documents indicate the Rear Service Staff had quartermaster, ordnance, repair transport, finance, medical, convalescence, school, and rice depot components.¹²

13. At district level, Gia Lai Province appears to be developed along standard VC lines in most respects. Captured documents indicate the province contains nine district units and one urban formation, the Pleiku City Unit.¹³ The documents in which district and urban concentrated units figure are voluminous¹⁴ and are largely confirmed by POW's, including a captive taken during the Tet offensive who claimed to be the head of the H15 Local Force Battalion.¹⁵ Captured documents suggest that at least five of the nine district units are company size, as the documents contain orders for two or more platoons of different district units, and exhortations to rebuild district units to their company size after sending replacements to province.¹⁶ The size of the other district level units are unclear. They may be presumed to platoon size or larger.

14. At the village and hamlet levels, a captured VC report dated 30 March 1967 indicated there were 8,830 guerrillas in Gia Lai including 912 females and 627 "youngsters (under 16)." The document stated the guerrillas were equipped with "713 small weapons, 92 mines, and 623 grenades."¹⁷ During the first quarter of 1967 the guerrillas had laid "638 spike pits, 1,349 booby traps, and 150 shell traps." A second document, dated May 1968, indicated the VC had 831 guerrillas in one of

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the province's nine VC districts.¹⁸ This would suggest that guerrilla strength province-wide was still in the thousands in the spring of 1968.

15. The Gia Lai guerrilla force, as portrayed in the March 1967 document is abnormal in two respects:

a. First, the force had proportionally fewer firearms than normal; a ratio, it would appear, of one firearm for 14 guerrillas. In this regard, the Gia Lai force resembles that of Ninh Thuan, which at one time had virtually the same ratio, but is far different from the guerrilla force of Tay Ninh, where almost all guerrillas are armed. Available evidence indicates that a countrywide ratio of firearms to guerrillas is between 1:2 and 1:3.

b. Second, fewer Gia Lai guerrillas are women than is usual. In most VC areas between one-fourth and one-third of all guerrillas are women. (How old the 627 "youngsters" are cannot be ascertained. It is probable, however, that a large majority of them are 14 or 15, since guerrillas younger than 14 are extremely rare.)

16. If the figures contained in the documents are accepted, two conclusions can be drawn concerning the Gia Lai guerrilla force. First, it is relatively ineffective in a combat situation. This presumption tends to be borne out by a document which described its inept performance during the 1967 summer-autumn campaign.¹⁹ Second, the guerrillas provide a large pool of partially trained manpower on which higher level units can draw. Thus, one would expect that Gia Lai province and district level formations are able to replace casualties with relative ease.

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17. In conclusion, at province level, there are probably on the order of 825 combatants: H15, 250; X45, 250; five companies at 60 men each, 300; and one recon platoon, 25. The MACV OB of May 1968 estimated province level combatants at 75. The province level administrative services in Gia Lai probably number about 300-350.

18. At district level, there are probably some 500 combatants (50 x 10 district level units), conservatively estimated. The size of the administrative services at district level is probably at least 250 (a ratio of one administrative service soldier for two combatants).

19. There are at least 5,000 guerrillas in Gia Lai; that is, some 3,800 less than in March 1967. The estimate here is derived by extrapolating the guerrilla strength figure of the one VC district (831), making allowance for the fact that this district is one of the more populous ones in the province. This estimate should include the observation that the combat effectiveness of the force is far less than its size would indicate.

The Kontum Province Unit

20. Whereas Gia Lai Province military units are well-documented on every level, information concerning those in Kontum Province is much less extensive. The principle evidence used in this memorandum to document the size of the military components of Kontum Province is a series of reports captured from a provincial ordnance depot on 7 June 1968. Very few personnel strengths of the Kontum formations are

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available. However, weapons inventories for various units have been a useful tool in estimating unit sizes.

21. At province level, Kontum Province military units are somewhat smaller in number than in neighboring Gia Lai Province. Captured documents and POW reports indicate that in mid-February 1968, province level combat forces consisted of a battalion (the 304th Infantry),²⁰ an engineering company,²¹ and a reconnaissance platoon.²² Weapons inventories suggest that the size of the 304th was then about 300 and that the engineering company had about 65 men. (Large numbers of documents indicate that in VC infantry formations, there are usually two individual weapons for every three soldiers, and in specialized units such as sappers and engineers, one individual weapon for every two soldiers.)

22. At least some evidence suggests the Viet Cong planned to increase Kontum province level combat forces considerably this year. One document, for example, indicated the enemy planned to create an additional infantry battalion, several additional infantry companies, and a combat support company some time after February.²³ Whether they have done so is unknown, although there has been at least one reference to a 306th Battalion -- possibly a new one.²⁴

23. As in Gia Lai, information on the Kontum province level administrative services is sketchier than that on the combat forces. While captured documents suggest that the Military Staff had a signal platoon²⁵

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and a security guard²⁶ associated with it, as well as personnel²⁷ and training school²⁸ components, it is difficult to assess the staff's overall size. Likewise, information is inadequate to show the strength of the Political and Rear Services Staffs, although the personnel strength of the ordnance depot, at one time 45 men,²⁹ suggests Rear Service components are probably large. (An informal CIA study came to the conclusion that ordnance personnel comprise something less than ten percent of the total Administrative Service at province and district levels.)

24. At district level, captured documents make it clear that each district as well as the province capital, Kontum City, has its own unit. The number of districts in Kontum is six.

25. The average size of the district units is difficult to determine. Ordnance reports giving district unit weapon inventories usually do not differentiate between weapons assigned to the district itself and those assigned to villages and hamlets subordinate to the district. Thus, we have the information that one district unit had 558 individual weapons assigned and another had 441 on hand in early 1968.³⁰ How many of these belonged to district local forces and how many to the guerrillas is unknown. On the basis of ratios established in other areas between the weapons assigned to districts and those to subordinate echelons, it is estimated that some 40 percent of individual weapons were in the hands of district echelons with the remaining 60 percent assigned to the

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guerrillas. If this ratio were applied to the district unit above which had 537 such weapons assigned, some 215 of them belonged on district level and 322 were assigned to the guerrillas. This would imply a district level strength somewhat over 300 (almost certainly including both combatants and administrative services). While such a number seems high as an average strength figure for the district units, it would appear to be supported by evidence that at least one Kontum district unit has two infantry companies (C41 and C42).³¹ On balance, the average number of district level combatants could be estimated at 150.

26. Captured documents concerning the Kontum City Unit indicate that it had some 63 individual weapons in both February and March 1968.³² This would imply a unit strength of about 100.

27. Given the vagaries of estimating the sizes of district combatant force in Kontum, an attempt to estimate the size of administrative services must be even more tenuous. Based on the ratio of one administrative service personnel to two combatants, these support troops would average about 75 per district.

28. At village and hamlet levels, information concerning guerrilla strengths is scanty indeed. One district in 1967 had some 319 individual weapons assigned to guerrillas.³³ This would imply a guerrilla force in this district of between 600 and 900, since the ratio of individual weapons to guerrillas nationwide is between 1:2 and 1:3. If this unidentified VC district is representative, there are at least 3,600 to 5,400 guerrillas in the six VC districts of Kontum Province.

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However, the 1:14 ratio in the neighboring highland province of Gia Lai suggests the number of guerrillas may be even higher.

29. In conclusion, at province level, there were probably at least some 390 combatants in February (304th Infantry, 300; the engineering company, 65; the recon platoon, 25; with the possibility of there being considerably more now, if new units have been activated as planned). Based on the size of Kontum's ordnance component (45 men), it is estimated that there are at least 400 province level administrative service personnel in Kontum.

30. There are an estimated 1,000 combatants serving at district level (150 x 6 districts + 100 belonging to the Kontum City Unit). There are an estimated 450 administrative services personnel serving at district level (75 x 6 districts).

31. There are possibly 3,600 to 5,400 guerrillas in Kontum.

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ANNEX

A comparison of strength figures from the document

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and estimated strengths is as follows. The

document disclosed 739 district troops in Gia Lai Province; 500 district combatants were estimated. The document revealed 6,934 guerrillas in the province; the estimate was 5,000. The document also substantiated the paper's assertion that a new provincial battalion (the X45 Battalion) had been activated, and disclosed the existence of a second new provincial battalion (the X67). The document confirmed the estimate of the strength of two provincial engineering companies. It gave their strengths as 65 each; the estimate was 60 for each unit. In this respect, the estimate of 825 provincial military personnel is little affected; however, once the strength figure for the second new battalion (the X67) taken from the document is added in, the provincial military personnel are increased from 825 to 1,022.

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15 August 1968

Research Effort on the Viet Cong Political Infrastructure

Headquarters Research

1. Research at Headquarters on the Viet Cong infrastructure -- the political and administrative control organization -- is conducted primarily within the Office of Economic Research. The Office of Current Intelligence and the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs have analysts who specialize in the Viet Cong political infrastructure and who prepare reports and briefings on a current basis.
2. The South Vietnam Branch of the Office of Economic Research has focused research primarily on the Viet Cong military and political organization and the North Vietnamese Army military manpower in South Vietnam. [] analysts in this Branch are occupied almost exclusively with analysis of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese military/strategic position in South Vietnam. [] work full time on the Viet Cong political infrastructure. A senior analyst who is a Vietnam specialist by virtue of duty tours and work experience, devotes most of his time to the infrastructure problem. In addition, he directs the work of [] who are responsible for research on the Viet Cong military proselytizing sections and the organization of the Viet Cong apparatus. The other [] working on the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army are engaged primarily in research to produce quantitative estimates of the regular Viet Cong

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forces, the irregular forces, and the overall Communist manpower balance in South Vietnam as reflected in recruiting, infiltration of North Vietnamese, and losses.

3. The South Vietnam Branch currently is preparing a report that will describe the organization, theory and magnitude of the Viet Cong military proselytizing effort. The success of this proselytizing and its importance can be measured by the rates of ARVN defections and desertions. Research is also being carried on to refine the basic estimates of the strength of the Viet Cong political infrastructure and to improve Branch resources on specific aspects of the Viet Cong control apparatus.

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MACV's Research Effort

6. In addition to MACV's participation in operations of the Phoenix Program, intelligence on the Viet Cong political infrastructure presently is being compiled and analysed by the Political Order of Battle Section of the Strategic Research and Analysis Branch of Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam (CICV). The section is comprised of about 18 analysts, including four officers, and is responsible for developing intelligence on Viet Cong infrastructure, boundaries, locations, structure, strength, vulnerabilities and activities. Much of the work of the section is taken up with preparing input data for automatic data processing of infrastructure personalities. The data base is being built up from a wide variety of sources and ADP services on the Viet Cong infrastructure are provided for the intelligence community. A CICV Newsletter on the VC Political Infrastructure is prepared periodically. The contents of these newsletters to date have not indicated much depth in research or sophistication in analysis on this problem.

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14 August 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Indochina Division

SUBJECT : The VCI Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger.

1. The VCI memorandum how being typed by St/P should be ready for transmittal to Dr. Kissinger. An earlier draft was coordinated with ONE (Bobby Layton). The present draft has a number of changes in it resulting from critiques by OCI and VNO. I believe all of OCI's requested changes were made. (OCI's copy with notes is attached).

2. We had a conversation with VNO [redacted], took their comments into consideration and resubmitted the paper. Attached are written comments to this draft from [redacted] along with my notes indicating that I have made a number of major changes for them. [redacted]

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3. There are only two remaining issues as far as I can see.

a. VNO is still probably [redacted]

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[redacted] uncomfortable about the discussion of how good the VCI estimates and eliminations data are. They would have liked more verbatim [redacted] for what reason I am unaware. As far as the numbers go, they are all really much worse than we say they are, and I think the way we explain them is as clear as any proffered alternative. [redacted] is wrong on many counts in this area. Anyone who wants to know how bad the [redacted] computer estimate is should talk to [redacted] in OCI. Bob Komer's piece on Phung Hoang (Phoenix) expresses what many of us think of the eliminations data.

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b. The other issue is our case studies ending in the paper which OCI and VNO found too simple. That may be the case, but Dr. Kissinger is intimately familiar with the details of these cases from the VSSG Cease Fire paper and doesn't need a fuller discussion. There is no difficulty with the judgements made, however.

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Chief, South Vietnam Branch

Attachments

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
November 1969

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Control Situation in Binh Dinh Province

I. Overview -- Binh Dinh

1. The Communists have demonstrated that they have the resiliency, cohesiveness, and recuperative power to sustain a presence in Binh Dinh Province. This has been accomplished in South Vietnam's second most populous province in the face of massive Allied efforts and in spite of serious reversals. Although the Communists have been seriously weakened during the past year, the chances are slim that by themselves the South Vietnamese will be able to erase Communist influence in this province in the near future.

2. Slow but steady progress in expanding military security and the trappings of pacification marked the Allied effort in Binh Dinh from mid-1965 to mid-1967. After setbacks, the Allies in late 1968 began to roll forward and, according to several indicators, at present the province has reached the highest general level of security yet recorded. The improvements in security conditions between 1965 and 1967 and since mid-1968 have resulted largely from US and Korean assistance which continues to provide essential support for the GVN.

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3. Operation Washington Green, carried out in northern Binh Dinh, has also contributed substantially to the improved HES scores for the province. This large-scale local operation has been able to provide security in areas which previously were bastions of VC strength. At the beginning of the operation in April 1969, the US battalion input was nearly doubled (from four to seven). At the same time, the remaining enemy Main and Local Force battalions had long since moved away or become inactive. With this use of US and Korean battalion forces, it was possible to establish and sustain Allied presence and begin the job of rooting out the VC infrastructure and Local Forces, as well as developing a local GVN security structure capable of dealing with the VC elements that remained.

4. Although security is a prerequisite for initial pacification success, the preservation and consolidation of pacified areas depends to a large measure upon the ability of the South Vietnamese to establish a viable political-military base and obtain some degree of popular support. In this respect and particularly in respect to its ability to provide a positive alternative to the influence of the Communists, the South Vietnamese government has scored its least success in Binh Dinh.

5. At this point in time US and Korean forces may have almost made their maximum contribution to improving security in Binh Dinh. Communist forces generally are not operating in company and larger size units

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because they cannot mass and maneuver these units without suffering high casualties. Moreover, with such large numbers of Allied forces deployed within the province, the enemy has emphasized tactics of harassment, including low-key hard to quantify incidents such as propaganda.

II. Analysis of Changes in Control

6. Three basic indicators of control have been used in this analysis. The first two -- percent of total rural population rated AB, and percent rated DEVC -- are shown in Graph 1. The third indicator used is shown in Graph 2 and is an index of weighted HES security scores.*

7. These three indicators are all basic measures of control. However, even though they are similar, they do seem to show slightly different trends. All three indicators show that Allied control began to deteriorate in November 1967. Also all three agree that security began leveling off from this fall sometime around February-March 1968. An interesting difference occurs, however, in showing when the Allied control began to improve. Both the percent of the population rated DEVC and the weighted security scores show that Allied control began to improve rapidly in September 1968. In both indicators, the improvement has been sustained until July 1969 when both show new highs of Allied control. The percent of the population rated AB, however, does not show

*Weighted by multiplying hamlet population times hamlet security, and dividing the total by total hamlet population.

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this sharp increase in Allied control beginning in September 1968. While there is an inflection point in September, the AB control does not show significant improvement before March 1969. Since March, the AB control has increased significantly but by July had still failed to reach the mid-1967 high point of control.

8. All three control indicators were used in the regression analysis. While the effect of the independent variables upon each was slightly different, the relationships were generally similar for the percent AB and weighted security scores indicators. Also, as would be postulated, the relationships associated with the percent DEVC indicator was nearly the opposite of those for the others. Therefore, in the section that follows, most of the discussion will deal with the factors which influence the percent AB control indicator.

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III. Factors Affecting Control

9. The strength of US and third nation forces as well as enemy strength appear to be the most important factors affecting control in Binh Dinh Province. Graph 3 indicates that changes in US and third nation strength precede changes in the percent AB control indicator by one or two months. The remarkably close correlation which seems obvious from the graph is confirmed by regression analysis; the coefficient of correlation between the two series is .85. US and third nation strength peaked during May 1967 and began a sharp drop that continued until February 1968, the beginning of the Tet offensive. This pull-out of US forces was followed closely by a precipitous drop in control. Beginning in November 1967, control as measured by the percent AB indicator dipped sharply until leveling off in April 1968. Regression analysis indicates that a change of 10,000 US and third nation troops in Binh Dinh would change the percent AB population by about 2 percent. Graph 4 shows that changes in VC/NVA force strength do not lead changes in control as measured by percent AB control indicator (and are not as strongly correlated by it). However, changes in enemy strength are more effective in explaining changes in the percent population in the DEVC HES categories.

10. Changes in Allied battalion days of operation are also important in explaining changes in AB control. Regression analysis suggests that approximately 100 battalion days of operation are required to improve control by one percent (normally about 425 battalion days are conducted per month).

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11. Changes in tons of ordnance dropped by US aircraft are another useful factor in explaining changes in AB control. Because of the close correlation of this series with US and third nation strength, it is not possible to meaningfully analyze regression equation coefficients. Communist attacks of less than battalion intensity are not particularly useful in explaining changes in AB control. Rather, changes in the level of attacks appear to follow rather than lead changes in control. Incidents of harassment, terror, and sabotage are highly correlated with attacks, and are also not particularly useful in explaining changes in control.

12. Changes in US and third nation strength, allied battalion days of operation, tons of ordnance, and enemy attacks explain more than 95 percent of the changes in AB control (an R^2 of .95). It should be emphasized, however, that this regression analysis must be considered preliminary because of problems with data which are discussed in the section that follows.

IV. Problems in Analysis

13. The analysis described in this study must be considered preliminary and interpreted cautiously because of a number of problems. The HES data which is the input for the dependent variable (control) contains periods of inconsistency. There is a 15.5 percent drop in the percent of the rural population rated AB between November and December 1967. This does not appear to be a true reflection of the change which occurred between these months, but possibly a province-wide revision of the HES accounting system. Other apparent

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inconsistencies in the HES figures occurred in the last few months of data for 1969; the percent of rural population rated DEVC seems to drop too fast. Since this last few months data is subject to revision, perhaps these figures will be revised to become more consistent. Still another limitation upon the analysis discussed within this paper is the absence of ARVN data. Because of this problem, it is impossible to evaluate what the effect would be of substituting ARVN for US forces. In addition, the limited amount of data received on RF and PF forces also make any conclusions as to their effectiveness virtually impossible.

V. Conclusions

14. Changes in the main force war in Binh Dinh Province appear to be the most important factors in the changing control situation in the province. It is apparent that changes in the number of US and third nation troops in Binh Dinh have preceded changes in AB control. These troops have been employed as a security screen in Binh Dinh; during the period prior to mid 1967 (when they were sharply reduced) and during Operation Washington Green these battalions have been deployed in relatively static, security-oriented positions. This analysis suggests that the long-term presence of these screening forces is vital to making and maintaining pacification progress.

15. No attempt was made to evaluate the effects of the Local Force war on the control situation in Binh Dinh. Data on the territorial forces begins in January 1968; its inclusion would require dropping all of 1967 from the regression. Guerrilla data is not

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available for Binh Dinh Province.

16. Enemy strategy and tactics -- Communist actions, as contrasted to their capabilities -- do not appear to determine control in Binh Dinh, although they are useful in explaining changes in control. VC/NVA attacks and incidents of harassment, terror, and sabotage are moderately highly correlated to control, but do not "lead" control. This would suggest that normal changes in these indicators do not in and of themselves lead to changes in control.

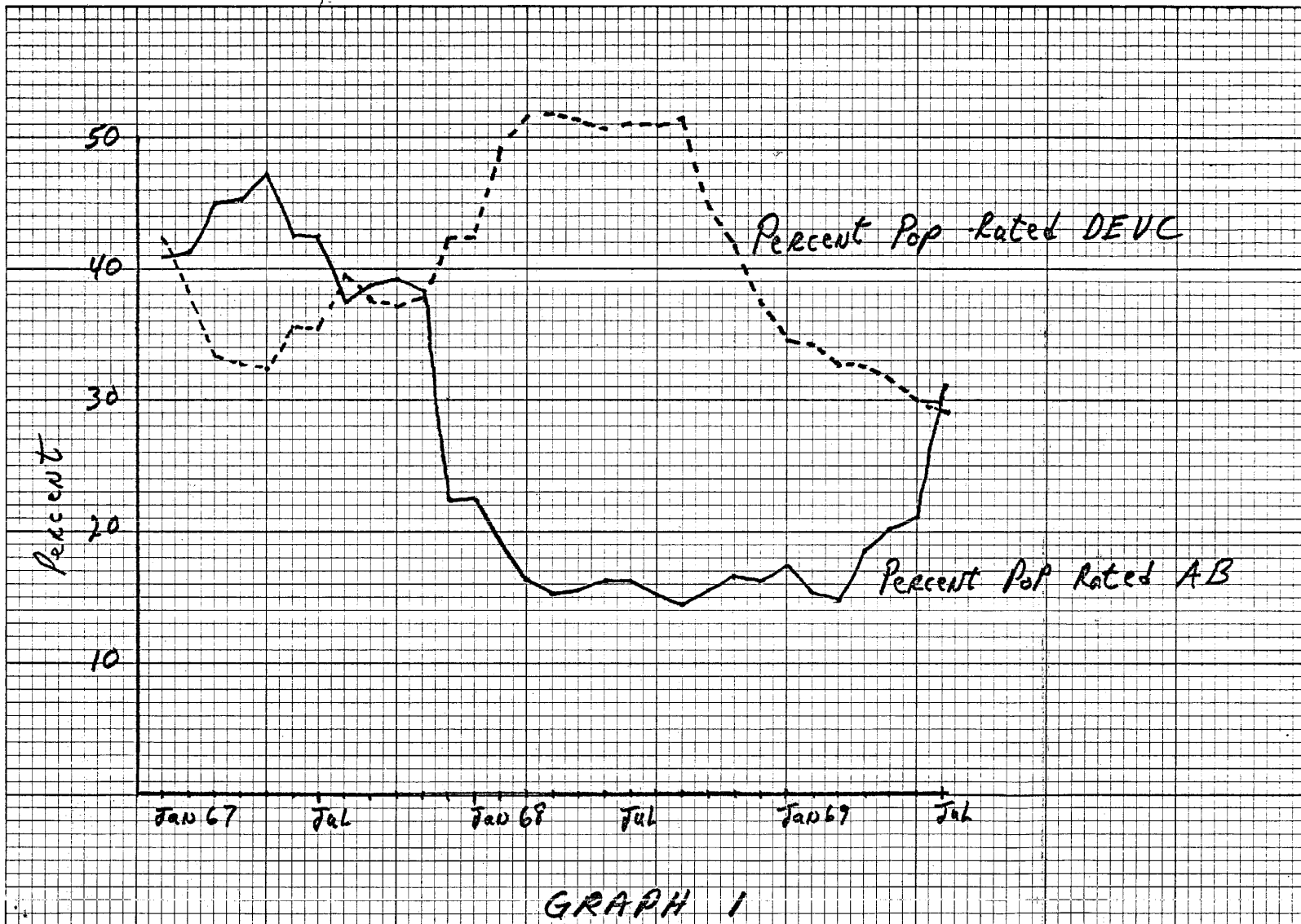
17. Similarly, US support (air and artillery, etc.) does not seem to determine control. Tons of air-delivered ordnance is moderately highly correlated to control, but not in such a way as to suggest it has an important determining effect. It is possible, however, that tons of air ordnance, enemy incidents, and VC/NVA attacks have partial effects which are not obvious individually, but when combined have a more direct effect on control.

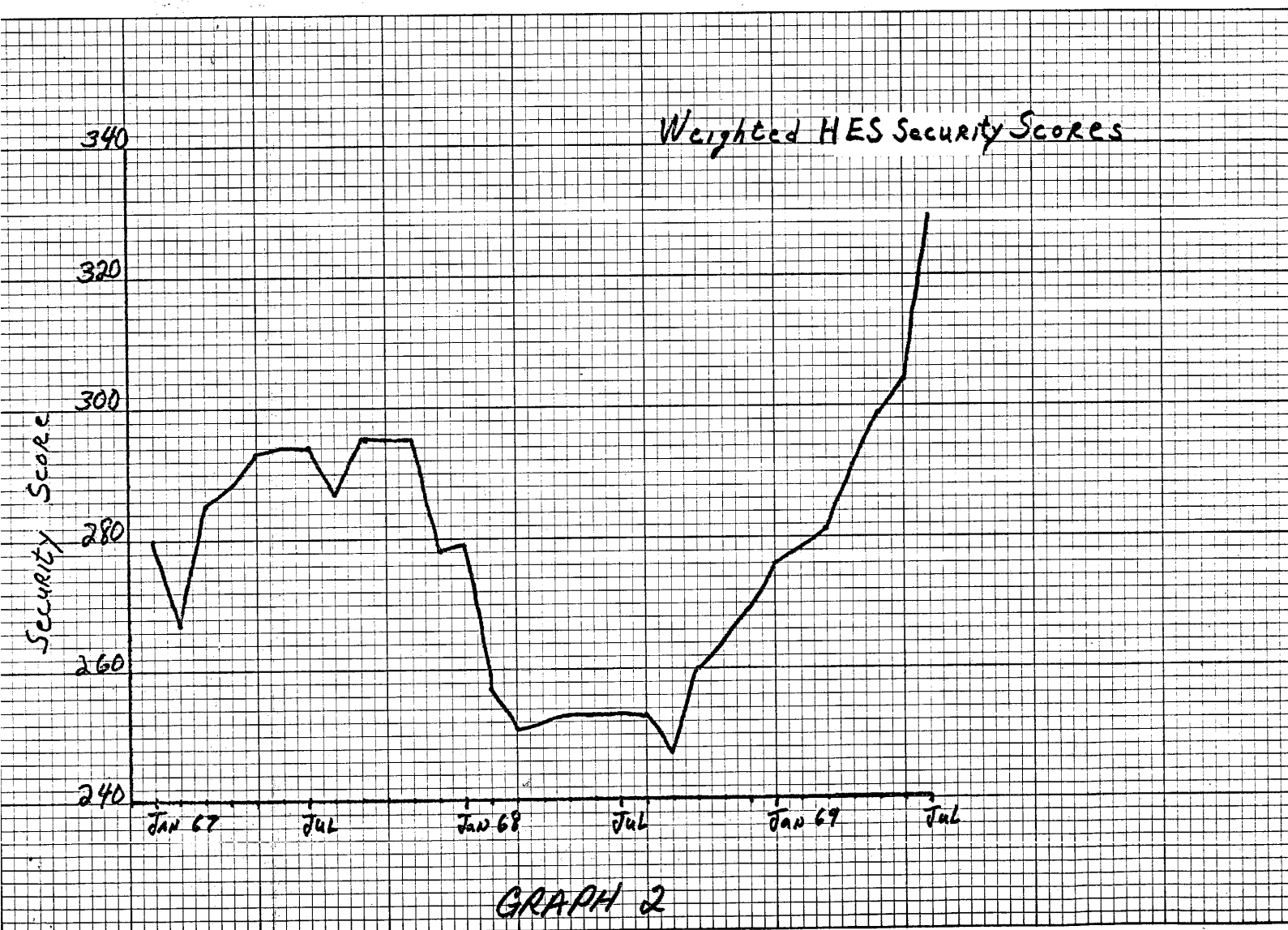
18. These results presented above are preliminary and represent our "first look" at the data distributed yesterday. We believe that given enough time to collect and carefully analyze the data, we will be able to reach more definite and useful conclusions. For example, we have not been able to obtain data on the number of ARVN troops deployed in Binh Dinh; it is possible that this information can be obtained in Saigon. We believe that it is more useful to consider changes in the level of control rather than its absolute level (the first difference of control). It also seems reasonable that looking at changes in control will go a long way towards getting around the problem of auto-correlation.

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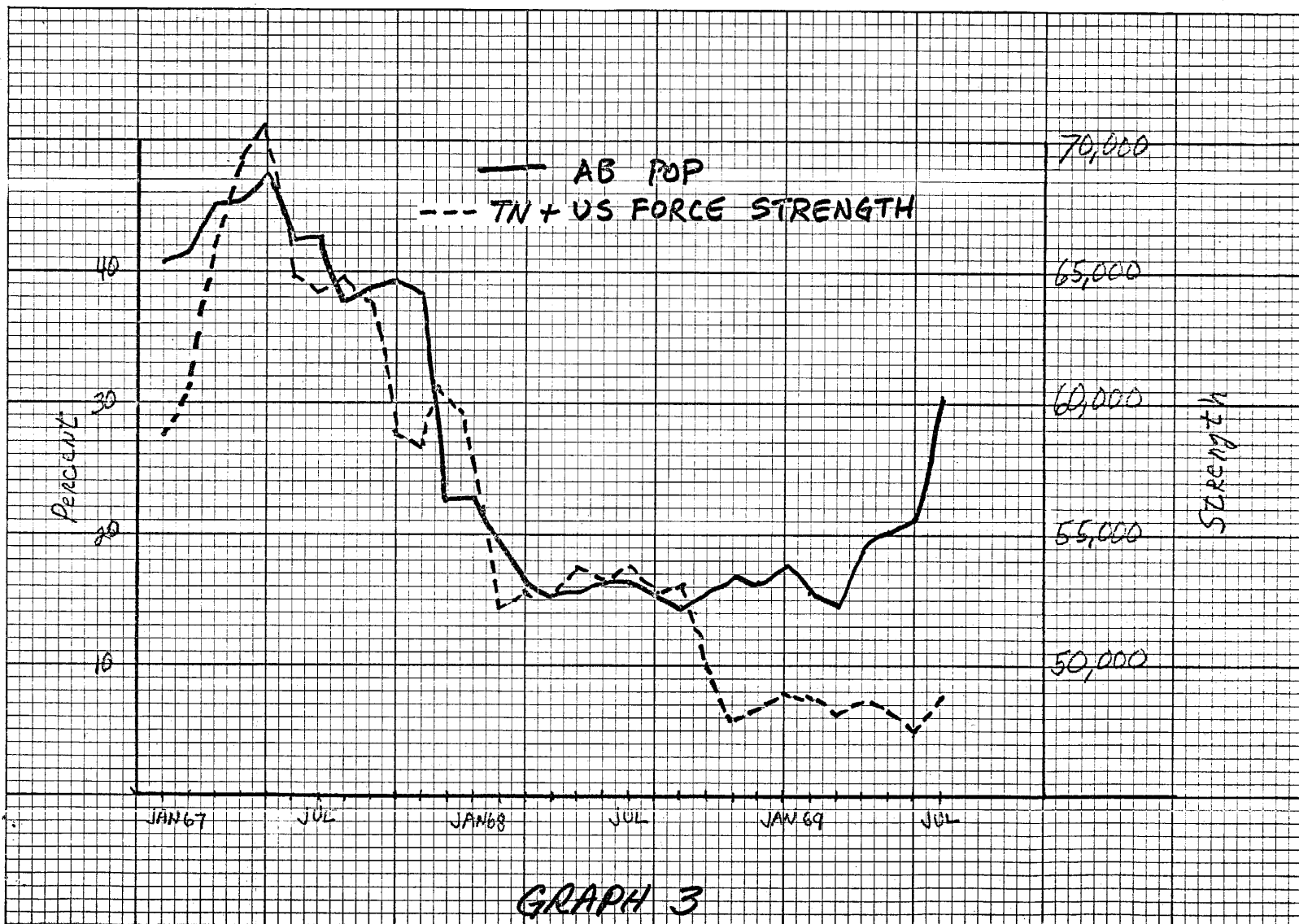
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Analyzing Conditions in the Countryside

1. The following are some considerations regarding the concepts of control and security as discussed in the Vietnam Working Group paper, "A Framework for Analyzing Conditions in the Countryside":

Control

2. The HES data used to measure control in the "Framework" paper measure control over the principle resource -- population. It has long been recognized that as a general rule the greater the degree of control and security (Allied access to the hamlet) the better the population estimate is apt to be. On the extreme end of the problem, large numbers of insecure hamlets particularly those in the VC category carry a zero population when in fact the population is simply not estimated.

3. The validity of this judgment brings to question the extent to which the phenomenon may bias the above mentioned control measurement and the extent to which they should be considered in any refinement of the model. It would seem possible to measure what some of these effects would be. The biases should work as follows: (1) VC controlled population is absolutely understated whereas GVN population is relatively accurate; (2) as population shifts from VC to GVN control, GVN controlled population would show the proper increase, but VC population would show no decrease.

4. The question of status of refugees relates to control and security in a number of ways. Particularly in those provinces where the number of refugees is substantial, the way we view them is an important measurement problem. Assume, for example, that a large group of new refugees is generated in a VC area as a result of Allied military pressure. If they are "secure" from the enemy, effective "control" is denied the enemy. However, should they be considered as a positive resource controlled by the GVN? On the other side, resettlement of refugees may be highly significant in terms of security and control but not show up in the data. It may be necessary to place refugees into a separate category and/or further subdivide them.

5. Viet Cong recruiting into their military forces, civilian agencies, and labor groups should be a good measure of effective population resource control. How does recruiting as a variable

compare with other measures of VC population control? cursory examination of the data suggests that VC recruiting has decreased at a faster rate than VC controlled population during the past 18 months.

6. The question of recruiting rates and refugees bring up the matter of population characteristics. The data used for "control" measurement treat all population as homogeneous. Yet, the following observations are in order:

a. Given the casualties of the war, it seems clear that there is less able bodied manpower per 1,000 population in VC controlled areas than in GVN controlled areas. Relative VC-GVN recruiting success over the past 18 months also supports this view.

b. At the same time, when the GVN acquires refugees, there is usually little able bodied manpower included.

Concepts of Security

7. In considering the proper framework for analyzing conditions in the countryside as a whole, we have had problems with the overlap between concepts of security and control. Conceptually, it is possible to provide reasonable and operable definitions for each. The framework memorandum defines security in terms of violence levels and a prerequisite for control which is defined in such a manner as to make it the operations goal. But these definitions still converge when it comes to measurement with existing or potential data. Other thinking has made security the operations goal on the grounds that security makes an amelioration of "conditions" possible.

8. In the course of the dialogue thus far on the matter of defining security, we have focused on the problem of whether to view security in terms of (1) enemy actions that currently produce insecurity, (2) enemy potential for producing insecurity, and (3) Allied capacity for promoting security, or more accurately, the problem of the proper mix amongst these. Obviously, all of these need to be considered in our evaluation of "conditions." The problem is, after having defined control as we have, how should we view security so that it will add an additional dimension to our understanding? We could take a narrow concept of post facto violence levels that do not include any data utilized in the measure of control, or we can utilize a broader concept which looks at the scope and effectiveness of the enemy threat.

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